



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Votes Against Incumbent Regents to Push Change at State Education Department

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY March 11, 2014

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Citing concerns over Common Core implementation, Kennedy votes ‘No’ on incumbent members; casts vote for challenger Walter Polka, a Western New Yorker focused on fixing challenges facing schools.

ALBANY, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, today voted against the slate of incumbent candidates for the New York State Board of Regents in an attempt to shake-up and bring change to the State Education Department. Citing widespread frustration over the implementation of the Common Core, Kennedy and several of his colleagues in the Senate and Assembly voted in opposition to the current group of regents whose five-year terms are ending this year.

In a contested vote, three of the four incumbent Regents were reappointed to their posts. The other incumbent asked to be removed from consideration late Monday, and a new member was appointed in his place. Kennedy voted in favor of challenger Walter Polka, a Western New Yorker with years of experience who has demonstrated a relentless focus on fixing challenges facing local schools. Unfortunately, the process was stacked against each of the challengers, and three of four incumbents were returned to their seats.

“In Buffalo and Western New York, families have been clamoring for real change within the State Education Department,” said Senator Kennedy. “The current members of the Board of

Regents who presided over the extremely flawed implementation of the Common Core must be held accountable. The future of our children is at stake. The status quo simply is not working for our schools, and change is urgently needed. The deck was stacked in favor of the incumbent Regents today, and I took a stand to protest the ongoing failure of the Board of Regents to fulfill their responsibilities on behalf of our children.

“Given recently exposed flaws and the woeful implementation of the Common Core, it is long past time to make major changes at the State Education Department. I am frustrated that many of my colleagues in the Legislature were unwilling to join me in opposition to the incumbent members who were up for reappointment. This was our opportunity to bring fresh perspectives to the lingering challenges facing schools across our state. The State Education Department is in dire need of strong, responsive leadership to help restore the promise of our schools. I urge the members of the Board of Regents to stand up for students, parents and educators and to take reasoned and decisive actions to ensure every student across the State of New York receives a world-class education.”

While advocates may be frustrated by the outcome of the vote, Kennedy said there may be a slight silver-lining – and that is the grassroots advocacy building momentum behind this movement to improve our schools.

“Previously, this process of reappointing regents had been largely ignored and was rarely given the attention it was due. I am pleased there is now heightened awareness of the challenges facing our schools, and I am thankful that New Yorkers across this state are engaged and in tune with the direction of education policy,” Kennedy said. “This grassroots advocacy is making a real impact in the development of policy and the implementation of solutions. Despite today’s disappointment, we must keep moving forward in our collective work to improve our schools and strengthen our children’s future.”

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.